

不遜な騎士と
仮面の王子



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Insolent Knight and Prince of Mask - WN

Chapter 00-01

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Chapter 0

00. Thunder roars, then comes a sudden shower.

The low groan of thunder reverberated from the distance, and black clouds shrouded the surroundings.

Not one tall, gigantic tree can be seen. It is necessary for a person to anticipate that he will be struck by lightning if this perfectly flat plain is hit by a thunderbolt. Furthermore, almost everybody among the crowd in this place possess metals.

But they did not care about something like that. Giving up at this moment is unforgivable.

In this vast lands called Plains of Ereadol, humans belonging to two factions are killing each other. One side aims to protect the country, whereas the other party intends to invade. And as for the state of affairs, the defending troops is in an overwhelming disadvantage.

A watchtower is set around the defending troops' stronghold. Snipers handling bows and arrows are up there, killing enemies. They accurately shoot down enemies, covering their allies. But they are in a high altitude that makes it easy to stand out, so it constantly involves the risk of receiving retaliation from enemy snipers. Besides, there is also the danger of being struck by thunderbolts from this moment on.

A man with blond hair is sniping from that tower, and he had his eyes set on a certain personage.

This person is rushing back to the headquarters while allies are advancing towards the enemies, it is quite conspicuous even if the sniper's good eyesight is left out. There are two figures of people on horseback. One is still a boy while the other can already be considered more or less a young man.

The man recognized the boy by sight and hurriedly descended the watchtower after entrusting the place to his subordinate.

The man rushed over to the boy who hid himself behind the shadow of sandbags piled up as a countermeasure against enemy penetration, and then called out to him.

“Your Highness Crown Prince! Have you retreated?”

“Yes... I was injured a little. However, it is fine. It is not something significant.”

The boy referred to as Crown Prince, answered that while holding his left shoulder. The injury itself is certainly not very serious, but a 100-man platoon should have been organized as his subordinates. Despite this, only one person is left by his side.

“Everyone in the platoon died. But there is one person who safely escaped, I believe so...”

The Crown Prince muttered, seemingly frustrated. The man assigned as the Crown Prince’s Knight also remained silent with a gloomy expression.

The 100 Knights sent with the Crown Prince were elites. While it may be true that they were in the forefront of assault, it is totally unbelievable that they were annihilated. But unfortunately, that is the truth.

“...our forces in the left-wing are also being pushed back. The way things are going, our main unit at the rear will be under attack.”

The man placed the bow he carried on his shoulder to the ground, then quickly treated the Crown Prince’s wound. The boy gritted his teeth due to the pain, but he did not utter a cry.

“Father... No, His Majesty the King, I must protect him.”

The boy murmured. The man answered it with silence.

The King usually devotes himself to domestic affairs, and has to lead an army in order to protect the country. He is reputed to be good, but when he sees Knights in the actual site, his state of mind turns to “Please forgive me.” It is not possible to entrust the full authority of the battlefield to a King who never went out to war when he was still Crown Prince. However, the King needs to abide since it is a regulation, it is this kind of sorry state. The enemy forces that were hiding for quite a time have surprisingly elevated their war potential. However, the King

made the wrong judgement in this fundamental area.

Even the Crown Prince — who had piled up several battle experiences despite being a youth of eighteen years old and can be said to have a long military service — knows it. But the King is the father of his life, the King is hopeless in battles but he takes pride in his abilities regarding domestic administration, he is also immensely popular among the masses. It is only natural for him to protect the King.

“——Your Highness. Please escape.”

“What...?”

The words that went out of the archer’s mouth surprised the Crown Prince.

“For us, you are our Crown Prince, a valuable ally we ought to protect. Please, withdraw from the battlefield.”

“Such thing...! Are you asking me to abandon Father and you!?”

“With all due respect, that is right.”

The archer declared indifferently and the Crown Prince was left speechless.

The archer continued.

“However, I am not asking you to just run away. Your Highness, I want you to meet a certain man.”

“A certain man...?”

“Have you heard the name Shal Hardeen?”

The Crown Prince muttered that name and became wide-eyed.

“The 【Hero of Rodell】...!?”

“Yes, well...it is that man. Although the person himself dislikes that alias more than anything.”

Before, the King received a surprise attack from the enemy nation’s spies while conducting an inspection at the Town of Rodell. Among the Guard Knights who fell one after another, there was a Knight who protected the King alone and on the contrary, he annihilated the enemy spies.

His name is Shal Hardeen.

He was fourteen at that time, the youngest among the usual Knights assigned as escort guards. That young man resolutely protected the King and also defeated the enemies. His military prowess was valued by the King and the young man was promoted in an instant. But the time when there were talks like — “Next Commander of the Knight Corps.” “It’s also possible to get promoted as General if this goes on.” — that Hero suddenly disappeared.

Thereafter, no one knew where he is or what he has been doing-----.

“I am that man’s friend so I roughly know all the circumstances. You must not be daunted even if I talk about it in detail. Your Highness, he now lives in the Town of Forodd. Please go there and meet him, then ask for his assistance. Shal will not refuse you if you give my name. If you stick to him, he will certainly give in.”

“Assistance... you want him to stand and fight in the battlefield?”

“If that happens, it will be the best outcome.”

The archer is full of a bitter smile. The Crown Prince heard from rumors that the archer before him is close with Shal Hardeen, but it was the first time he heard it from the person himself. Come to think of it, this archer is still young, too. He had repeatedly been promoted despite his young age, this man is also not an ordinary person. Forodd is a small town in the northeast of the Plains of Ereadol. Even the Crown Prince is not aware of it, except that the town is in a mountainous region and named Forodd. It is a town in the countryside. He is likely to arrive there within half a day if he went on a horse.

“I will take the reprimands of His Majesty the King and His Excellency, the aged General.”

The Crown Prince nodded after remaining silent for a while.

“...I understand. I will go to Forodd.”

“Thank you very much.”

The archer relaxed his expression and shifted his attention to the Knight who faithfully waited beside the Crown Prince.

"You, too. Will you go?"

"Ye-yes...! I will definitely protect his Highness."

"Alright, I will leave it to you. It is normally ultra vires to issue instructions to a Knight from another corps but in this case, I am giving this order as your superior officer. In the name of Lieutenant General Leonhard E. Archridge, Commander of the Inferushia Kingdom's Archery Corps, I appoint you as His Highness the Crown Prince's Guard. No matter the situation, you must not abandon your duty."

The knight stood straight and turned a salute towards the archer, Leonhard.

"It will be as you decreed!"

"Very well."

Leonhard faced the Crown Prince once again.

"Your Highness Alex, please somehow be safe. I will await here for your return."

"I will come back no matter what. Therefore, please do not die, Leon...!"

Leonhard smiled at the Crown Prince's remark.

"I am tenacious as you see, it does not seem like I will die even if I asked for it."

"Fufu... that is relieving."

Alex also showed a small smile, and grasped the reigns of his favorite horse. He then rode horse in the next moment. The Guard Knight also followed suit.

Alex nodded to Leonhard while atop the horse, and began running from the place. The destination is northeast, in the Town of Forodd. —— Leonhard picked up his bow while seeing them off.

"...Shal, this may be unfair to you. I am not asking you to return to being a Knight. Even so, I want you to at least shelter His Highness——"

Leonhard muttered alone with just a little smile.

It is necessary to cut across the battlefield to head towards Forodd. Obviously, the probability of catching the enemy's eyes is considerably high so arrows aimed at Alex were fired. Alex and the Guard Knight shook them off with swords, but a knight wielding a sword from their flank came close. The moment when

Alex tried to dodge the sword, an arrow pierced home the enemy's shoulder.

When he sent a fleeting glance back to the rear, Leonhard had climbed the watchtower again and nocked an arrow. 【Leon of the Distant Arrow】 is the Commander of the Archery Corps who boasts skills just as his nickname says. An ordinary person can definitely not make the arrow reach this distance, and his strong arms also drastically increase his power to draw the bow.

While thanking Leonhard for his assistance, the two of them withdrew from the battlefield.



The sound of the distant thunder resounded, and Shal calmly raised his eyes to the sky. Black clouds from the west are drifting this way and he has no doubt that it will turn into a thunderstorm by the end of the day.

— — — *There's nothing more troublesome than fighting in the rain* — — —

"...Shal! Hey, I'm talking to you Shal!"

"...Nn? What is it, Tilly?"

Shal was abruptly snapped back to reality from his absentmindedness, and he asked a random question. A bag of vegetables was angrily thrust in front of the young man in his mid-teens.

"Really, please don't become absentminded in the middle of shopping!"

"Sorry, sorry. I was just thinking that it will rain soon."

Shal accepted the bag while smiling wryly and passed several copper coins to Tilly as payment. Right then, Tilly's mother unexpectedly came out of the shop's interior. She frowned after looking up at the sky the same way Shal did.

"Oh dear, what foreboding clouds... They say that there's a war happening at Ereadol's border, I wonder if they're fine."

"It is the duty of the military to defend the country. It will be a problem if they do not do their work properly."

Shal grumbled sarcastically. Tilly looked up at Shal, seemingly anxious.

"Shal... Is it really alright? Isn't Ereadol just a short distance after descending

the mountain? The enemies might march to this town..."

"Don't worry. A town this deep in the mountains won't be found. As long as the people from Inferushia Kingdom's army will not run away to this town. If that happens, the enemies that will run after them will find us."

When Tilly suddenly turned pale, Shal patted her without reservation.

"As for me, I'm more worried about the thunderstorm tonight. My house is crumbling. I need to reinforce it a little before the night comes."

"Shal is really optimistic..."

Tilly's mother showed a wry smile. However, the people in the town are relieved seeing him with this relaxed attitude. That is how much they rely on this young man.

Shal left the shop after waving lightly to Tilly. He then came out from the marketplace and made his way to his hut at the outskirts of the town. Shal's home at present is also his workplace and store.

Shal placed the things he bought inside the house, then immediately brought wooden planks and finished reinforcing the house with practiced hands. Shal cannot complain since the house was lent to him even though he is an outsider, but shabby is still shabby. Thus, he will be hassled by the leaking roof overnight if he did not reinforce it frequently.

After having finished the carpentering, Shal went back to his unfinished work. His atelier is next to his residential space. Inside, there were several kinds of medicinal herbs, boiling apparatus, grating apparatus and others.

In short, Shal is currently a pharmacist. Both his parents used to be the same, and he took lessons in compounding medicines as a child. There is no physician in the rural town of Forodd so Shal's concocted medicines fly off the shelves.

<Note: fly off the shelf or sell like pancakes, i.e. sell quickly.>

Moreover the effect is outstanding. "Obviously, I made it after all," both him and others acknowledged. The people in Forodd lived without a physician or a pharmacist so when Shal said "I can make medicine," he was welcomed with surprising swiftness as a member of the town.

While grinding the herbs, Shal thought —— It's been five years since I started living here.

Forodd is not aware of the person named 「Knight Shal Hardeen」. Information about the event that made Shal be recognized as the former 【Hero of Rodell】 never reached a rural area like this. This is the reason why Shal decided to live here.

“...But if they see me mixing medicine like this, those guys might dislocate their backs in surprise...”

Shal muttered, laughing alone as he imagined that spectacle. Of course, ‘those guys’ are his former comrades in the military. He himself thinks that this doesn’t suit him, so it’s easy to imagine that his comrades will be astonished.

Still, Shal likes his present life. He never touched a sword ever since he retired from the military. His sword is sealed at the depths of this house’s storage room, he even evades it when it enters his sight.

Something like a sword, never again——.



It had began to drizzle by the time night elapsed, while the wind blew. And when midnight passed, it had turned into a complete thunderstorm. The downpour sprayed against the hut, making the roof leak at once even with the reinforcements. There was no helping it, so Shal placed a bucket under it and laid on the hard bed.

There is no form of amusement, and Forodd doesn’t even have a source of light during the night so there is no choice but to sleep in the evening. As a Knight, he still played around at the Royal Capital even at night but that is not possible here. Fortunately, Shal had fallen into the habit of rising and going to bed early, but this kind of healthy lifestyle is also very good.

Shal had been sleeping soundly when he was woken up by the sound of knocking at the door. It startled him from his sleep, making him get up from the bed. Being alert even when asleep is his strong point.

He can certainly hear the sound of knocking at the door. Moreover, it is considerably forceful.

Is there an emergency patient? Shal instantly wondered. He is not a physician but if there is a person with deteriorating physical condition at the dead of the night, they will bring in that person to Shal by all means. However, going out in this kind of rainy day is even more dangerous.

Shal opened the door in a hurry. Wind-driven rain mightily blew indoors at the same time. However, Shal frowned when he saw the people standing in the doorway.

There were two young man. Neither is a resident of Forodd.

But there is one thing he knows———.

The ultramarine clothes that the two of them are wearing is the uniform this country's Knight Corps.

Chapter 01

01. What business do you have with a mere pharmacist?

Shal was seized with the impulse to shut the door at the other party's faces, but he managed to endure it. The indoors will get wet if they keep standing at the doorway so Shal let the two of them inside the house for the time being. Then, Shal closed the door and leaned his back on it, crossing his arms in front of him. It was in order to prevent the two from running away.

"What business do two Knights have at a midnight like this?"

The Knight with small stature covered with a cloak, removed his hood. What appeared was the face of a young boy with golden hair. Blonde hair is a proof of nobility in this country. Shal is the exact opposite, his hair is dyed brown, as he is a commoner.

The young boy had beautiful features that are much more well-proportioned than any girl's. His cheeks are white porcelain giving off sense of translucence, tinged with a slight blush due to the coldness. *His also looks beautiful, I'm sure he will even be more popular if he wears proper clothes other than the Knight's uniform,* Shal let his thoughts wander in another direction for a brief moment.

"...You are Colonel Shal Hardeen, right?"

The voice that came out from the young boy is also higher than a boy's.

"Returning a question with a question is the first thing you shouldn't do, y'know? Answer the previous question, what business did you come here for?"

"We came because we want to ask for Colonel Hardeen's assistance."

Shal knitted his eyebrows.

"...Really. It's the first time I heard someone address a veteran of their rank."

"Then, you really are...?"

"You know even if you don't ask, that is obviously right."

Shal left the front of the door and lit up a lamp placed atop the shelf. The lamp dimly lights up.

“So, who are you guys?”

While he asked that, 「Where did I saw him before?」 Shal can vaguely recall the boy's face. But it seems like they are not that closely related, he thought that he never exchanged words with the boy.

The boy straightened his posture.

“I am Alex L. Inferushia.”

“...Ah, the Crown Prince, right? It's no wonder you seem familiar.”

Even if Shal became aware he is the Crown Prince, his attitude did not change at all.

——— Of course, he's actually shaken inside but he never showed it in outwardly.

Then the Knight who was keeping silent from behind opened his mouth, highly offended.

“Do you not intend to change your behavior even if you are aware of His Highness the Crown Prince?”

“...Not really? I am not this prince's attendant, and aren't I the master of this house? Why do I have to entertain uninvited visitors?”

“You bastard...”

Alex restrained the Knight who lost his temper. Shal opened a shelf and took out two towels, handing them over by throwing them.

“You'll catch a cold if you stay like that.”

The blunt former knight unexpectedly stated kind words. Alex blinked, but received the towel without daring to say anything.

“Thank you. Please forgive my subordinate's rudeness.”

“I'm not so narrow-minded that I will feel offended by something of that degree. Your subordinate's opinion was appropriate.”

“...Is that so? I see. In other words, you will not bluntly refuse or send us away.”

Even though he was easily seen-through, Shal remained silent and let the comment pass.

“Even so, you guys knew I live here, huh?”

Shal lit up another lamp and went to the kitchen, beginning to work on something.

“Well, that is...”

“I will sock that bastard Leon the next time I see him. Giving out my information without permission...!”

Apparently, Shal already anticipated it even without Alex telling him. Alex appealed towards the kitchen, where they can only hear Shal’s voice.

“Leon is in a predicament at the moment. He asked me to seek for your assistance.”

“Assistance? What the heck do you guys want me to do?”

“You were once called the strongest Knight, that military might... I would like you to lend it for the sake of our Inferushia Kingdom.”

“...I don’t know who told you those things but I am just a mere pharmacist right now. Unfortunately, I don’t intend to pick up the sword once again.”

“What? Pharmacist...?”

Alex was dumbfounded. Shal came back from the kitchen. He is holding two cups with rising steam. He then placed it on the table in front the sofa.

“Don’t stand, sit down. This talk will be long.”

“Eh, ah... That is right, please let me do so. Incidentally, this is...?”

“Tisane. This is the best for a cold body... This kind of thing is currently my job.”

Shal sat down on the chair opposite Alex as he said so. Alex is sitting on the sofa but the Guard Knight remained standing. Shal did not say anything since it is a Knight’s duty. He only handed the Tisane to him.

Alex became wide-eyed as he drank a mouthful, as if surprised.

“...Delicious.”

“Really?”

“You referred to it as tisane so I was anticipating that it tastes awful but... it may be easy for me to drink it.”

“It’s because I made it so that it will be easy to swallow. It drew the attention of people with colds coming to visit the pharmacist’s house. It influenced my reputation.”

Shal turned his eyes towards the ceiling while saying that. There is a slight blotch on the ceiling because of the rain. Alex placed the cup on the desk.

“We have strayed from the topic, but Colonel Hardeen, will you not accept my request for assistance?”

“Yes.”

“Why? If this country is defeated, Inferushia will suffer the invasion of Theodora. Do you not want to protect this country?”

Theodora is the enemy country of Inferushia Kingdom. A country founded in the northwest desert zone, it is a historical enemy nation. After an interval of ten years, it had now become a full-scale war.

“I think my back is not big enough to carry the entire country. It’s impossible for me to have that kind of burden.”

Shal quietly answered. He sketched the map in his mind before he knew it, and pursued the subject while taking that into account. He often used that tone when persuading someone during the time he was still in active duty.

“I considered the significance of the enemy’s invasion and everything. The people of Theodora residing in that desert area want the rich nature and iron mines of Inferushia. That is what they want but those guys don’t know how to produce crops and the methods of mining. To do it, they have no choice but to use the locals. Do you get it?”

Alex meekly nodded. Shal continued.

“In other words, Theodora’s army will kill Inferushia’s army but not the citizens. They will keep them alive and make them work. The country will fall if the people will die, you know? With a pretext like that, dispute between

countries is not a very significant topic for people in the countryside. The head of the nation will change, but they will do the same thing as usual. They will diligently work in the fields, transport harvested vegetables and receive money. Only that."

"...But!"

"Do you think it's heartless? Sorry, but that's how humans are. As long as their usual way of life will not change, they will not willingly take action. Similarly, me too."

Shal leaned his body to the back of the seat.

"I'm content with my current life. As long as someone won't barge in and destroy that, I won't do anything. I am not interested with this country's fate anymore."

"...Then if someone will intrude on that, you will take action?"

"You'll lead the enemies to this town? I didn't expect you had that kind of nerve."

Alex let out a small groan, he looked like he wanted to say something but decided against it.

"...I see."

Alex nodded, his expression colored with some disappointment. Apparently, he judged that persuasion appears to be impossible.

"I understand your point, but I cannot go back. I promised Leon that I will come back with you. I will not return to the battlefield until you do so."

"Did Leon told you I'll give in if you cling to me?"

It hit the bull's eye, Alex remained silent. Shal breathed a sigh.

"If you will let me say my opinion, I think Leon's intention is different."

"Different...?"

"It's fine if you didn't notice. Well, do as you like. I'm not so inhuman that even I, will throw out His Highness. You can settle down here tonight, but I don't mind if you stay here for how long if you plan to stick with me. I will take care of you

while you're here but I won't be responsible for you after that. That's only what you need to remember."

The next room is vacant, use anything in the house as you want, Shal left those words and withdrew to his own room.

Closing the door, Shal softly clicked his tongue. *Even if I return to the front lines, one person cannot dramatically change the tide of the war, what is that bastard Leon thinking!?* He hurled curse words at his friend who's out of sight but in fact, he saw through Leonhard's aim.

But that is just a stopgap "for now", he intends to draw out Shal to the battlefield eventually.

If Shal who was famed as 【Hero of Rodell】 returned, morale will rise and may be the driving force to repel the enemy. Furthermore, in addition to Shal's combat skills, his troop-commanding ability is also high. Shal was once entrusted the role of commanding 1000 Rider Knights.

From the start, Leonhard's aim is 『Shal must return to being a Knight』.

Five years ago, Shal retired from the military due to a certain event. That event left a deep scar in Shal's heart, Leonhard also knows the circumstances in detail more than anyone. Nevertheless, he obstinately requested Shal to come back to service. *Please consider my feelings here*, he wants to say. Contrary to his appearance, Shal is awfully delicate and has a tendency to drag out things. Leonhard might think it is irritating.

『Are you still agonizing over it?』
『Will you not fight beside me one more time?』
『This country needs your strength.』

Leonhard had always written those things in the occasional letters they exchanged.

Leonhard is trying to encourage his friend who disappeared from the center stage five years ago. His worries were transmitted to Shal, too. However, the trauma still remains.

"...Leon. It's heavy...for me."

Muttered Shal, suddenly recalling Alex's face.

The first time they met was when Shal received his reward for protecting the King from enemy spies during the Rodell inspection. In the Royal Palace's throne room he entered for the first time, he remembered the demure Alex next to the King. He was probably seven or eight years old at that time.

After that, they met again after several years. It's lucky for Shal that Alex cannot remember "that time". If Alex ever mentioned that to persuade him, the confidence that he will keep on being stubborn has somewhat disappeared.

It has been eight years since then. With some traces of his looks from that time, Alex grew up as a dignified young man———.

"...How do I say this, Leon is good-looking, the Crown Prince is good-looking —— Why are all nobles so handsome!?"

The only nobles Shal knows are the two of them so it's only natural for him to have this statistics. Even so, he thinks that both of them are even more beautiful than a woman.

What are you thinking, me!? Shal scolded himself, and threw down his body on the bed.



Alex realized that he knew nothing about the man named Shal Hardeen.

The things Alex knows about Shal are trifling. He is called the【Hero of Rodell】, he suddenly retired from the military five years ago and hid his whereabouts, he is an incomparable master of sword, and is apparently a friend of Archery Corps Commander Leonhard. Besides, all these things are just what he heard from other people.

How can he shake that man's heart?

"Your Highness... It is already late at night, will you sleep now? You must be tired from the continuous horse-ride."

The Guard Knight urged him. However, instead of answering, Alex threw in a question.

"Do you know anything about Colonel Hardeen?"

“Eh... no, that. I do not consider myself that well-informed.”

“I see... But I think he had a reason for obstinately refusing to fight...”

Alex was thinking when the knight incidentally recalled something and opened his mouth.

“Which reminds me, Colonel Hardeen had an older brother.”

“Older brother...?”

“Yes. His rank was Major General, he also belonged to the same Knight Corps as the Colonel and was the 10000 Knights Captain. If I remember correctly, he passed away around seven or eight years ago.”

“Seven or eight years... Is his older brother’s death the reason why Colonel retired?”

He was referred to as 10000 Knights Captain, it must mean he was「A Person Who Commands 10000 Rider Knights」.

Before Alex sunk into his sea of thoughts, the Knight appealed for him to rest in the same way as a while ago. Alex nodded obediently, but it was mentioned that there is only one room. So what should they do?

“What do you intend to do?”

“I will borrow this sofa. Please make use of the room, Your Highness.”

“...Sorry. Thank you.”

Alex smiled, seemingly a little apologetic and went to the room. The Guard Knight sat down on the sofa and breathed out.

The rain had become even more tempestuous, and there’s no knowing when the lightning will cease.

It seems like the night is still long———.